

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Reconsideration of this patent application is respectfully requested in view of the foregoing amendments, and the following remarks.

The amendments to this patent application are as follows.

Claim 3 was cancelled without prejudice, and the limitations thereof were inserted into claim 1. Claims 5, 7, 15, 16, 17, 18, 21, and 25 have been rewritten in independent claim format. In claims 10 and 11, a minor typographical error has been corrected.

Claims 1, 2, 4, 6, 8, 9, 13, 14, 19, 20, 22, 23, 24, 26 and 27 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over DE 4,416,576.

However, claims 3, 5, 7, 10-12, 15, 16, 17, 18, 21 and 25 were objected to as being dependent upon a rejected based claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent claim format including all limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Because independent claim 1 has been amended to recite the features of allowable claim 3, claim 1 is now believed to be allowable. Also all claims dependent upon claim 1 are also believed to be allowable. In addition, the rejection of the claims under 35 U.S.C. 103 has now been rendered moot. Withdrawal of this ground of rejection is respectfully requested.

In summary, claim 3 has been cancelled, and claims 1, 5, 7, 10, 11, 15, 16, 17, 18, 21 and 25 have been amended. In view of these amendments, it is firmly believed that the present invention, and all the claims, are now in condition for allowance. A prompt notification of allowability is respectfully requested.

Because there is now a total of nine (9) independent claims, enclosed is a check in the amount of \$258 to pay for the addition of six (6) extra independent claims (6 X \$43) for a Small Entity. The Commissioner of Patents and Trademarks is hereby authorized to charge any additionally required fee, or to credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 03-2468.

Respectfully submitted,
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Encl: Check in the amount of \$258 for 6 extra independent claims for a Small Entity.

I hereby certify that this correspondence is being deposited with the United States Postal Service as first class mail in an envelope addressed to: COMMISSIONER OF PATENTS, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, VA 22313-1450 on January 28, 2004.


Maria Guastella